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# TLS

## THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

FRIDAY • 25 AUGUST 1978 • No 3,986 • 25p

## Walther Rathenau, contradictory capitalist

The scholarship of dirty words

## The poetry of Milosz

Gerald Griffin, Adam Lindsay Gordon

## The letters of Kafka

## Fiction: Iris Murdoch; Anthony Burgess on 'Magdalene'

Commentary: Tim Hilton on the Hayward Annual

## The Catholicism of Scott Fitzgerald

## Cézanne in context

'Victorian Voices' by Anthony Thwaite



Seated girl, by Van Gogh, a pen and reed-pan sketch done at Arles in July 1888. It is one of the 125 black-and-white illustrations accompanying 34 colour plates in Jean Leymarie's *Van Gogh* (212pp, Macmillan, £20), a reissue of a handsomely produced biographical study first published in 1968.

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# Father of the twentieth century

By Richard Schiff

WILLIAM RUBIN (Editor): *Cézanne: The Late Work* 415pp (with 427 illustrations, 50 in colour). Thames and Hudson. £20.

A collection of essays may exhibit a position which none of its individual contributors is conscious of advocating. A particular aspect of a study, insignificant at a single appearance, becomes striking as it recurs. This essay in *Cézanne: The Late Work* leads one to assume that the artist's independence from the influence of his contemporaries, from any sympathetic concern for their theories or techniques, was extreme. Such independent status may be appropriate for a seminal figure, a man often called the "father" of modern art, but it is nevertheless disappointing that a major exhibition, deserving of the extraordinary acclaim it met, has generated so few new ideas to challenge this received opinion.

In their general effect the catalogue essays represent Cézanne as the enigmatic, isolated genius already described in the 1890s by Paul Gauguin, Emile Bernard, Maurice Denis and others of a Symbolist orientation. These episodes were their chosen master but were quite capable of making him serve their own ends. They related him to a tradition of artistic expression of universal significance. His art embodied ideals of beauty that transcended chronological and cultural limitations. His forebears were the ancient Greeks as well as the Baroque artists he was known to admire; and his progeny would refine his manner, surpass his achievement, and dominate the twentieth century. The only pointers to Cézanne's early Symbolist outbursts categorically would not relate him to his immediate contemporaries and personal friends, the Impressionists, Monet, Renoir, and Pissarro. Essentially, the Symbolists wished to establish a precedent for their own anti-intellectual and anti-materialist stance; they needed a "father" Cézanne, unknown to the general public, dissociated from the Impressionists through lack of exhibition, and marked by eccentric peculiarities of style was eminently available. Regardless of the many ways in which his paintings resembled those of the Impressionists, the Symbolists chose to emphasize the differences; their selectivity has guided criticism to the present day.

The basic aspects of the Symbolist interpretation became the foundation of nearly all critical response (positive or negative) after Cézanne's major exhibition of 1895. Retrospectively, this event has been seen as inaugurating the period of the "late" style. Although the Symbolists usually did not distinguish the earlier work from that of his earlier period, the increase in critical commentary after 1895, most of it emphasizing the artist's independence, may have contributed to the subsequent tendency to regard the later works as distinct achievements. But the original commentary was not limited to Cézanne; Pissarro, Degas, and Mallarmé were repeatedly depicted just as Cézanne was. The Symbolists, like most of the critical theorists, saw, however, it is not true to say, that Cézanne was the only one to be found.

*Cézanne: The Late Work* testifies to the continuing hold of their formulation. As in the Symbolist account, Cézanne is shown to relate to a tradition of great painting (the Baroque) and to prefigure the achievements of younger artists (those of the early twentieth century). Nothing, however, is said of his relationship to his contemporaries (Impressionist or otherwise), or the abundance of stylistic and theoretical analogies suggesting exploration. While most of the essays follow the pattern of critical investigation laid down by the Symbolists, this does not imply conscious acceptance of that position by Symbolist or even by modernist. The modern scholars seem largely unaware of the origin of their own interpretive stance. While ramifications of issues originally raised by the Symbolists continue to be

extended until they grow extremely thin and etiolated, the thick roots of Cézanne's "impressionism", his continuing involvement with the technical procedures of Monet and Renoir and his lifelong affinity for the early theories of Zola, are ignored. Modern scholars seem too close to Cézanne's "symbolism" to see it for what it is, and too far removed from his "impressionism" to uncover it. He remains as his Symbolist admirers preferred to see him; the reincarnation of the universal truths of his past, isolated from his present, and the precursor of nearly everything radically new in his future.

This is a picture difficult to accept of any painter. Clearly a successful artist might embody his own cultural tradition, and even give birth to a new one, but it is not to argue the contrary might well be impossible, for such relationships are the foundation of all historical continuity. But could this same artist be so different from his own contemporaries, especially those who embodied the same post and gave birth to the same future? Such disregard for the investigation of Cézanne's immediate historical context is curious. The Symbolists had professional reasons for taking their odd position on Cézanne. One wonders if the master's recent researches do, or whether they simply have not stepped far enough back from their work to notice an obvious lack.

The nine essayists do not inherit the burden of Cézanne's Symbolist interpretation with equal enthusiasm; some, whether consciously or not, provide information and insights which may dislodge the received view, or whether they simply have not stepped far enough back from their work to notice an obvious lack.

He distinguishes the key descriptive adjectives of the early critical response to Cézanne: "naïve", "awkward", "homely", "sloppy", and "unintelligent". He shows that these and other seemingly negative qualities were usually viewed as Cézanne's valuable assets. These terms have a history of positive connotation extending at least to the late eighteenth century, and were applied to artists as diverse as David, Delacroix and Monet. Until Hamilton's brief account of their application to Cézanne is supplemented by more general research, the artistic significance of his contemporaries will remain difficult to grasp.

Like Hamilton, Douglas Drulik and John Rewald confine themselves to well-circumscribed terrain. Drulik investigates the artist's lithographic production, a relatively unimportant part of the total oeuvre, as the writer shows, interesting in its relation to the history of print-making itself. His essay exhibits a keen sensitivity to Cézanne's style and technical procedures. Rewald, who has produced a distinguished biography of Cézanne and has revised and expanded the available catalogue data, describes the artist's last motifs, the collection of photographs of these motifs, and the artist's interest in the painting of the depicted forms of objects represented in the paintings.

Lawrence Gowing's ambitious study is a watershed for he recognizes the acute need to re-evaluate the language of Cézanne's theoretical pronouncements, especially his use of the terms "sensation" and "realism". He argues that "sensation" carries a public meaning for the artist, corresponding roughly to seeing and feeling, or perhaps experience and intuition. Accordingly, "realism" becomes an interpretive act resulting in the synthesis of an external view and an internal system of organization. Gowing implies that the internal aspect of Cézanne's art was the product of both passion and calculation. There are extremely important points and reveals much of the essence of Cézanne, perhaps more than has ever previously been disclosed through investigation of his

written statements. What Gowing has come to observe, however, are nineteenth-century commonplaces; he is aware of some precedents (Castagnary and Constable), but does not discuss the most relevant ones. The double sense of "sensation", and indeed of most terms referring to the confrontation of a subject and an object, can be found in all major theorists of Cézanne's age and in their predecessors — Stendhal, Baudelaire, Taine, Zola, and even Charles Blanc. The problem of the relationship of private expression to a public nature and a public "logical" art belongs to Cézanne's entire generation; his struggle with that problem reveals his place in history but the source of his contemporaries' appreciation of his effort.

Although the rigour of Gowing's presentation should not be slighted, he fails to note the concept of "temperament", which, like "sensation" and "realism", must intrigue the scholar if only because it appears to be one of the artist's most basic theoretical terminology. Gowing attributes to Cézanne a concern for "lapse" sensations, but for the artist and his Impressionist contemporaries the source of the emotional (or internal) aspect of sensation was temperament. Like most modern critics of Cézanne, Gowing does not link sensation, temperament, nor does he associate the artist with Zola's famous definition of the work of art, "notre sensibilité à l'émotion".

Despite these omissions, Gowing succeeds in relating his reconstruction of Cézanne's theory of art (not merely a theory of colour or of perspective) to specific technical procedures that he describes with a sense of deep respect, perhaps stemming from his own experiences as a painter. He discusses two very significant aspects of the artist's technique which have not been fully appreciated by modernist critics: the colour modulations (modelling by means of changes of hue) and his distribution of similar patterns of colour over represented objects of varying physical nature. This account of the origins and purposes of these stylistic characteristics is one of the best in the volume; it is innovative and its language is the passionate urgency following upon hard-won discoveries, first Cézanne's and now Gowing's.

Some of the details, though illuminating, must be challenged; for the predisposition to view Cézanne apart from his immediate historical environment lines Gowing's analysis. Through the 1890s Cézanne generally followed a pattern of working with Monet and Renoir; shifting from effects of value gradation (chiaroscuro) to those of hue modulation in order to suggest bright atmospheric light. Gowing seems to associate this pattern, yet fails to associate it with the probable Impressionist inspiration.

Like Kurt Badt, who reached remarkably similar conclusions in his *Art of Cézanne*, Gowing finds the painter's use of colour "ordered" and "logical" and compares its regularity to that of a musical scale. Although judgments of order must be relative, Gowing surely overstates the systematic quality of Cézanne's application of hues. His unusually acute powers of observation seem directed by the view that Cézanne's art represents a return to "logic" following a chaotic aberration of earlier Impressionism, which was the view promoted by the Symbolists. But Gowing's theoretical and practical findings—especially his conclusions with regard to "sensation", colour sequences, and unification of the painting—suggest stronger affinities between Cézanne and the Impressionists than have yet been discussed. Nevertheless, he continues to interpret his view in light of old and unworthy critical premises.

Thomas Reff also offers a study of style and theory, but it lacks the integration that Gowing achieves. Reff, according to four traditional subject classifications, and a final section on theory, is only loosely related to the preceding remarks. Reff's general points are vague and weakened by his own presentation of exceptions that fail to maintain a convincing picture of a

specifically "late" style. He writes, for example, that "echoes of [Cézanne's] own exuberance and despair" translated with an unprecedented "intensity of colour and form", characterizing the late landscapes, but subsequently he notes a significant number of "effortless" and "typical" landscapes, devoid of signs of "conflict or struggle". He moreover, argues that the stylistic qualities of paintings of different subject-matter cannot be directly compared, yet such comparison is the foundation for many of his observations, especially on questions of chronology.

Although Reff's essay contains a wealth of information, it is marred by such internal inconsistencies and contradictions. Further confusion arises from his varied and sometimes idiosyncratic uses of the terms "classical" and "baroque". He repeatedly calls Cézanne's art "baroque in character", while eliminating the most obvious traditional senses of the word. The baroque/classical distinction held great meaning for Cézanne's earlier critics; but without sufficient historiographical reference, the dichotomy today seems without purpose. Some of the failings of Reff's essay may be due to simple carelessness: his text states that every "signed painting of the artist's maturity" is "completely covered surface", while the corresponding footnote unexpectedly informs us that one of these "has some uncovered areas".

William Rubin contributes a study of early Cubist works analysed in the light of their stylistic references to Cézanne. Although he notes that "the experience of Cézanne has altered the way we see Cubism", he occasionally lapses into attributing to him the rhetorical concerns of Braque or Pissarro. In light of Hamilton's remarks on the early critical response to Cézanne, the reader can see that Braque, as described by Rubin, was applying a Symbolist interpretation to his "awkward" master. But Rubin knows Braque was on his way to becoming a Cubist, and implies that in many respects Cézanne was, or was becoming one, too. Rubin's neglect of comments suggests that the establishment of any formal canonism, the result of a later painter imitating an earlier one, indicates

## Kenyan domestic

By Quentin Hughes

KAJ BLEGVAD ANDERSEN: *African Traditional Architecture: A Study of the Housing and Settlement Patterns of Rural Kenya* 239pp. Nairobi: Oxford University Press. £12.75.

For years European societies have imposed upon Africa a form of housing which was a result of technological development under very different climatic conditions; or else they have actively encouraged Africans to ape European models. The result has often been that, through lack of understanding and sympathy, traditional African models have been abandoned when in fact these local structural materials with economy and ease, and provide a level of comfort above that provided by imported building styles.

Kaj Andersen has studied the wide variety of traditional housing types found in one small part of Africa—Kenya—in the hope of providing information that could improve the standard of the rural housing now being erected by his own university housing project and, by the local authorities, for the benefit of the products of their traditional way of life or to any way superior to those glittering imports from the Western capitalist world.

The Kenyan tribes have developed different life-styles according to the areas in which they live. Some are hunters, others herders, others agriculturalists. Some were settled, others more or less nomadic. Circumstances dictated the evaluation of building materials, from thick trunks to thin branches, covered with thatch, skins, mud or

shared intentions. Much of the interpretation of Cézanne is a mere compulsion to work out a "theory" of his art, a "theory" which is not a theory at all. If any artist is to be understood, it is not by a "theory" but by a study of his work, and of the context in which it was created. The book is a study of the work of a man, and of the context in which it was created. The book is a study of the work of a man, and of the context in which it was created.

Rubin's point of view is a very serious problem in art history. His past events, but not his present, are the focus of his study. His study is a study of the work of a man, and of the context in which it was created. The book is a study of the work of a man, and of the context in which it was created.

Three shorter, less detailed essays by Liliane Bégout, Geneviève Monnier, and Novotny, extensive catalogues by Rewald, and a large map of Cézanne's work, complete the volume. The book is a study of the work of a man, and of the context in which it was created. The book is a study of the work of a man, and of the context in which it was created.

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## SOCIOLOGY

## A masterly muddler

By Rodney Needham

ANTHONY GIDDENS: *Modernity and Self-Identity* 255p. Fontana. Paperback, £1.95. Hardback, Harvester Press, £5.95.

Lightberg once wrote that in the past few years the author of the book has been a "masterly muddler". It is hard to imagine the author of the book being a "masterly muddler". It is hard to imagine the author of the book being a "masterly muddler". It is hard to imagine the author of the book being a "masterly muddler".

It is this strong sense of continuity that Anthony Giddens has intended to bring out in his study of this "modern master". The exposition is plain and straightforward. After an introductory sketch of Durkheim's life and work, the chapters proceed conventionally through the stages of labour, suicide, state and politics, moral authority and education, religion and theory of knowledge, to conclude with a critical commentary. While the account is meant to be comprehensive, it notably omits some of the more exotic but still important aspects of Durkheim's thought, such as "La prohibition de l'inceste" and "Le sacré".

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reviews and other occasional pieces edited by Jean Duvalignat under the title *Journal sociologique* (PUF, 1969). As for the extensive ground that is covered by the author, the level of commentary is indeed, unavoidably summary and at places verging on the perfunctory, but it makes a reliable introduction to Durkheim's works.

What is not explicitly conveyed, however, is just why Durkheim is to be considered a "master", and how it is that his ideas have exerted their general influence. Actually, there are grounds for considering his reputation rather paradoxical. His epigrams of concepts, to begin with, are decidedly shaky. Sociology is to be founded on a study of "social facts", but facts are by definition factitious and the distinct properties of social facts are elusive. "Collective representations" are prime instances, yet often enough they are neither truly collective nor strictly representations. The consequence is that sociology is a dubious entity; inferential, impressionistic, and ambiguous.

Durkheim's premises are scarcely more sound: e.g. the contrast between sacred and profane, the distinction between normal and pathological social conditions, or the profane force of the cruel experiment. Methodologically there is little to validate many of Durkheim's conclusions. In the *Annales* school, and one would like to have this factor set properly in relation to the qualities of the work. The suggestion has even been made by a Jewish scholar (to historian and social anthropologist) that there is something of a "Jewish" character in Durkheim's thought, and that it is not well understood by gentle readers. If there is anything in this, and if whatever it may be can be conceived as a fantasy, its explication of Australian section systems depends on a typical nineteenth-century view of the "primitive" as a collection of "tribes" and "clans". When we look back at Durkheim's own demonstrations of the practice of sociological analysis, it is a per-

uncovering of what was really going on in capitalist society with an equal analysis of how it is that what people think is going on is produced. At its worst, Marxist explains by an optical to the absence of the "real" agents of history ("the revolt was doomed to failure because the proletariat had not yet constituted itself"). It is not always equivalent to say that they did not act as they did not.

One answer—Surra's—is to look for a theory of the general of meanings for individuals to supplement the "broader truths" of historical materialism. But the failure of Surra's attempt seems to confirm Durkheim's criticism that phenomenology cannot find content for its account without going beyond the strictly methodological and a priori sphere. If, alternatively, the theory is to be provided by historical materialism, we should expect to find it as part of the analysis of the circulation process of capital. Lukker's treatment of commodity fetishism was the first to attempt a theory of ideology on this basis. But the theory of reification which he produced to explain the "independent life" of commodities was negative—a theory of loss of meaning, of their detachment from the productive activity which is at the origin of meaning and history.

The Marxism which develops from this starting point is curiously in harmony with the theses of the end of ideology or "secularization". That it opposes, it confirms that technological rationality is inherently levelling and demythologizing at the same time as "attacking the neutrality of money, to trying to explain mythical phenomena" it returns soon to negative explanations—"Mythic cults flourish on the West Coast because monopoly capitalism can no longer..."

What is at stake in the rational understanding of the irrational is the Marxist version of the epistemological problem bequeathed to us by Durkheim. It is the question of what gives phenomena life, heauty, and meaning in

factually various question in ask whether he ever got anything right—or whether his work was not characteristically, in W. E. H. Stanner's felicitous and respectful phrase, a "William middle".

Certainly there are encouraging answers to be made, and Giddens's account provides pointers in some of them; but the issue is fundamental, and even the relatively limited compass of the *Modern Masters* format would still have permitted the treatment of matters that critically are so central, the consideration of problems rather than the supply of competent summaries of major works. (Admirable examples in the series are Edmund Leach on Lévi-Strauss, Charles Rosen on Schweitzer, or J. P. Stern on Nietzsche.) So if Giddens's effort is commendable within its limits, there are grounds for disappointment that its limits are so contracted and that it excludes so much that is problematical and hence intrinsically interesting.

These subtexts also another question of an ultimate kind, which could have been mentioned and which in itself might be made the subject of a sociological analysis. Durkheim was Jewish (as were his brilliant colleagues Marcel Mauss, Robert Hertz, and other collaborators in the *Annales* sociological school), and one would like to have this factor set properly in relation to the qualities of the work. The suggestion has even been made by a Jewish scholar (to historian and social anthropologist) that there is something of a "Jewish" character in Durkheim's thought, and that it is not well understood by gentle readers. If there is anything in this, and if whatever it may be can be conceived as a fantasy, its explication of Australian section systems depends on a typical nineteenth-century view of the "primitive" as a collection of "tribes" and "clans". When we look back at Durkheim's own demonstrations of the practice of sociological analysis, it is a per-

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## Interpreting truly

By Geoffrey Hawthorn

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN: *Hermeneutics and Social Science: Approaches to Understanding* 263pp. Hutchinson. £6.95 (paperback, £3.50).

Some of those committed to a hermeneutic sociology to the view that we have to try to understand the concepts and conventions which constitute forms of life, believe that the result must be an appreciation of the essential ambiguity of all such forms. Others disagree. Zygmunt Bauman is one. He is convinced that "there is a broader basis of intersubjectivity, which forms of life could share, that argument and eventually agreement between forms of life is attainable". The "methodology of true interpretation", the concern of hermeneutics, must become a "theory of social structure which ideally facilitates unimpeded communication and genuine agreement between forms of life". Success lies at that point at which "the problem of understanding as an activity distinct from communal life... disappears".

Such faith comes down to him, of course, furnished here with hubris, garished there with despair, but remarkably sustained, over two hundred years defined by Kant and developed by Hegel and Marx, revived by Dilthey, refined by the phenomenologists, recovered again with reservations by Heidegger and others in Frankfurt, embraced by some Englishmen after 1950, by some Frenchmen in 1940 and by some Americans since, and now most publicly proclaimed by Jürgen Habermas. It defines social theory at its most ambitious. As Bauman says, it has generally had two

defences. The first, which he calls the "rationalist", has been to try to define the necessary conditions of the distinctively human life. Thus Husserl, bracketing out pure consciousness, free of all contingency, free indeed of the knowing subject; and thus Talcott Parsons, bracketing out the pure social act, free of all contingency again, free, in his case, of the actual ends of actual actors. The difficulty with this defence, as Honneth explains, has always been that of bracketing back in, of translating back to real beliefs and actions in real societies.

The second defence, the "historical", has been to try to accommodate and connect (although also to disavow) the essential ambiguity of all such forms of life. History, thus Marx; thus Max Weber (Bauman insists), believing that "the historically produced accretance" of *Zwischenweltlichkeit* supplied the missing foundation for universal agreement on a vision of unity delivered by History. Thus Marx; thus Max Weber (Bauman insists), believing that "the historically produced accretance" of *Zwischenweltlichkeit* supplied the missing foundation for universal agreement on a vision of unity delivered by History.

They are veridical: there is the philosophical difficulty raised by the tension between the probable indeterminacy of translation (is there a foot of the meter, in holes and so in culture too, to be understood?) and the human desire for a certain order. Hermeneutics is a distinctively different way has failed, as has himself, is now said to see: it has collapsed into a muddled history of Kantian transcendentalism and blind over-optimistic hopes. The problems remain. They are veridical: there is the philosophical difficulty raised by the tension between the probable indeterminacy of translation (is there a foot of the meter, in holes and so in culture too, to be understood?) and the human desire for a certain order. Hermeneutics is a distinctively different way has failed, as has himself, is now said to see: it has collapsed into a muddled history of Kantian transcendentalism and blind over-optimistic hopes. The problems remain.

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William Haley

## Westward ho

HENRY ARTHUR BRIGHT: *Happy Cowry This America* 486pp. Athens: Ohio State University Press. £12.67.

This diary kept by the serious, lively-minded, twenty-two-year-old son of a Liverpool ship-owner, an Irishman, Henry Bright, who was a student at the United States and Canada in 1852, has interest more for American readers than for English. It

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